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4-H CLUB WORK: ITS OBJECTIVES AND PLACE IN THE EXTENSION PROGRAM ^{1/}

Erwin H. Shinn

Senior Agriculturist

In this discussion of 4-H Club work, it seems logical and consistent to deal with the subject under three categories: (1) The present organic structure of 4-H Club work, (2) its objectives, and (3) its place in the extension program. Extension workers generally recognize the importance of adequate and appropriate consideration of each of these elements in planning a functional program of 4-H Club work. Unless these elements are fully and properly developed and coordinated into a unified whole, the 4-H Club program will not attain its fullest possibilities.

The Present Organic Structure of 4-H Club Work

4-H Club work represents the junior phase of the cooperative Federal and State Extension Service. As such, it is not a separate and distinct extension service for rural youth. Organized on a nation-wide basis by means of Federal and State legislation, the cooperative agricultural Extension Service is designed to serve both adults and youth in rural areas. Cooperative extension work is carried on by means of a unified educational program in which both groups share a common interest and assume coordinated responsibilities in the solution of problems of the farm, the home, and the community. The problems which the extension program is designed to meet are current and real. They are studied in their natural setting in actual life situations. The solutions of these problems are vital to the welfare of the farm family in achieving higher living standards, increased farm income and a more satisfying rural life. The 4-H Club program provides for the training of farm boys and girls in the best farm and home practices, through proper educational methods.

Three Federal acts supplemented by State legislation provide the authority for cooperative extension work. These acts are the Smith-Lever Act of 1914, the Capper-Ketcham Act of 1928, and the Bankhead-Jones Act of 1935. Supplementary funds have been appropriated from time to time. In the legislation authorizing cooperative extension work, the junior phase, or 4-H Club work, is recognized as an integral part of the whole Extension Service. 4-H Club work derives its authority from the same Federal and State legislation as extension work for adults. This is logical, and the work should be continued on the same basis.

The structural units in the nation-wide organization of 4-H Club work are Federal, State, county, and local. Local cooperation, which includes the interest and encouragement of parents in helping to develop and carry out the club program through serving as local leaders or in other capacities, is as essential to the success of the 4-H Club program as the services of those directly representing

1/ Talk given at the State short course for the in-service training of agents and assistant agents, Blacksburg, Va., June 12-17, 1944.

the Federal, State, or county units. The county agricultural and home demonstration agents are, of course, the key persons in the developing and carrying out of an effective 4-H Club program but to do their work effectively, they must have community and neighborhood organization to enable them to reach the farm families. The fullest cooperation of the State staff is fundamental to the success of the work of county and home demonstration agents and their local leaders in carrying out an effective 4-H Club program. Observations disclose that the most effective 4-H Club work is being done in those areas in which all the structural units are coordinated and combined into harmonious action with the community and neighborhood leaders who are selected and trained for the work they are to do. The structural pattern for the servicing of rural boys and girls through 4-H Club work is far from complete. There is need for constructive thinking and rigorous action in the direction of a more effective and permanent organization for carrying on the work in the different counties. It is gratifying to note that progress is being made in developing the organizational structure for 4-H Club work, but a great deal of educational work is still needed before this desired objective can become a reality.

Objectives of 4-H Club Work

4-H Club work is frequently referred to as a specialized educational enterprise for rural youth. It is our unconditional opinion that guidance and training in 4-H Club work justifies this interpretation, particularly when the work is carried on in keeping with standard educational objectives and where sound teaching methods are motivated to the attainment of these objectives. The ultimate answer to this question, however, rests with the purposes of the acts providing for extension work, the breadth of their interpretation, and the prevailing evidence as to how well the work has functioned in providing for the educational growth of farm boys and girls, the achievement of which will improve agriculture and farm family living.

In substance, the purposes of the Smith-Lever Act were to aid in diffusing among the people of the United States useful and practical information on subjects relating to agriculture and home economics and to encourage the application of the knowledge learned. The method of procedure was to consist of the giving of instruction and practical demonstrations in agriculture and home economics to persons not attending or resident in colleges. The instruction was to be given through field demonstrations, publications, and otherwise. The purposes of the act were broad in scope and elastic and therefore, susceptible to interpretation that would provide a system of training to fit the needs of both farm adults and their children.

In the 30 years in which the national system of extension work has been in operation, many individuals and groups have attempted to define the objectives of 4-H Club work in more specific terms. Perhaps one of the most significant series of such declarations is to be found in the "Recommended Policies Governing 4-H Club Work."^{2/} This report sets forth what the committee considered to be the distinctive educational objectives of 4-H club work, as follows:

^{2/} Report of the National Committee of the Land-Grant Colleges and the U. S. Department of Agriculture on 4-H Club Work, May 1935.

1. To help rural boys and girls to develop desirable ideals and standards for farming, homemaking, community life, and citizenship, and a sense of responsibility for their attainment.
2. To afford rural boys and girls technical instruction in farming and homemaking, that they may acquire skill and understanding in these fields and a clearer vision of agriculture as a basic industry, and of homemaking as a worthy occupation.
3. To provide rural boys and girls an opportunity to "learn by doing" through conducting certain farm or home enterprises and demonstrating to others what they have learned.
4. To instill in the minds of rural boys and girls an intelligent understanding and an appreciation of nature and of the environment in which they live.
5. To teach rural boys and girls the value of research, and to develop in them a scientific attitude toward the problems of the farm and the home.
6. To train rural boys and girls in cooperative action to the end that they may increase their accomplishments and, through associated efforts, better assist in solving rural problems.
7. To develop in rural boys and girls habits of healthful living, to provide them with information and direction in the intelligent use of leisure, and to arouse in them worthy ambitions and a desire to continue to learn, in order that they may live fuller and richer lives.
8. To teach and to demonstrate to rural boys and girls methods designed to improve practices in agriculture and homemaking, to the end that farm incomes may be increased, standards of living improved, and the satisfactions of farm life enhanced.

In both scope and content these principles are broad in their implications. They are also specific enough to serve as a solid foundation for 4-H Club work for some years ahead. They are based on sound educational objectives. These broader objectives for 4-H Club work have been recognized for several years and are at present well incorporated in 4-H Club programs. There is ample evidence to substantiate this point.

4-H Club work is motivated on the principle of "learning to do by doing." To this end, each club member must agree to carry on a piece of useful and practical farm or home work and to keep a record of it, to be entitled to membership. The instruction to be given on the project or demonstration is offered by an agricultural or home demonstration agent, or by both, and also by local leaders. These agents are graduates of an agricultural college in agriculture or home economics. They carry on 4-H Club work with the cooperation and personal assistance of voluntary local leaders comprising farmers, homemakers, older 4-H Club members, or teachers.

One of the safe and sound methods of testing and measuring the results of an educational program as it affects the lives of young people is to obtain from those who have had training in the program, an evaluation of the training they have received. For this purpose, some data ^{3/} were collected 5 years

^{3/} A Study of a Group of 2,453 Former 4-H Club Members in 11 States, Erwin H. Shinn, U. S. Dept. Agr. Ext. Serv. Cir. 342, 23 pp. Washington D. C. 1940

ago through personal interviews with 2,453 men and women in 11 States. The members of this group had been in 4-H Club work 15 years or more prior to the time the data were collected. Their average age was 26 years. The most valued information was obtained from those who were club members 2 years or more. The values reported are grouped under these headings: (1) Educational values, (2) economic values, and (3) health, recreational and social values.

Under educational values, a large percentage of the group said they derived advantages from their club work in these ways: (1) They were stimulated to learn and to acquire more education, (2) inspired to go to college, (3) gained more knowledge of agriculture or home economics, (4) learned about opportunities in agriculture as a vocation, (5) learned to speak before groups, (6) learned how to improve farm and home practices, (7) learned games and plays, (8) learned how to preside at meetings, and (9) learned about the State agricultural college and its function.

With respect to economic values, these points ranked high: (1) Learned economic values of keeping records and accounts, (2) helped to understand values of standard or quality products, (3) helped to acquire property and to start savings, and (4) realized the importance of agriculture to the Nation.

Under health, recreational, and social values of 4-H Club membership, these points rated high: (1) Developed better health habits, (2) stimulated interest in home and community improvements, (3) increased social activity at home and in the community, (4) broadened acquaintances, (5) stimulated participation in recreation, (6) helped to make farm life more enjoyable, (7) increased appreciation of agriculture and country life, (8) developed a spirit of cooperation through working with others, and (9) provided guidance for a more appropriate use of leisure time. Other values were mentioned by the persons interviewed, but those listed stand out as the more important.

In our quest for an improved agriculture and farm life, no one would question that such achievements are highly significant. To attain a more complete extension of these and other values to large numbers of rural boys and girls should be and is the guiding spirit of 4-H Club work.

In a war-torn world where we have at stake all that we revere in our form of government and all that we hold dear in our way of life, what could mean more to the fuller development of rural boys and girls than the philosophy to which they dedicate themselves through the 4-H Club pledge: (1) My Head to clearer thinking, (2) My Heart to greater loyalty, (3) My Hands to larger service, and (4) My Health to better living for my club, my community, and my country. These ideals are worthy guideposts in developing a program of education for young people.

The values achieved through 4-H Club training coincide with what are commonly accepted as sound principles of education. These values are the ultimate attainment of every well-organized and effectively executed 4-H Club program.

The Place of 4-H Club Work in the Extension Program

The fact that 4-H Club work is an accepted part of the structural organization of the Federal and State cooperative Extension Service has already been treated and needs no further discussion. Perhaps, the discussion of this topic should concern itself with "What place should 4-H Club work have in the extension program?"

Each State maintains a 4-H Club staff of 1 to 10 persons in normal times, but these State leaders are far from being independent of the whole extension organization. There are about 250 full-time county 4-H Club agents, mostly in Northern and Eastern States. In the vast majority of States, the State leaders of 4-H Club work are dependent solely upon agricultural and home demonstration agents or their assistants in the counties to carry out the club program. In the South assistant agents give at least 50 percent of their time to 4-H Club work.

The State 4-H Club staff, however efficient it may be, and whether there is a county club agent or not, cannot carry out 4-H Club programs on its own initiative and power. It must have the cooperation of the entire State extension staff, including the extension director, the assistant director or State leader, as the case may be, and the district agents and subject-matter specialists. In addition, it must have the full support of the county agricultural and home demonstration agents, who carry out the 4-H Club program through a well-organized and trained group of volunteer local leaders. The interest and cooperation of parents of club members are vital to the success of the work the boys and girls do on their projects or demonstrations. Home demonstration clubs can play an important part in helping with 4-H Club work. Subject-matter leaders in these clubs can help local club leaders on 4-H demonstrations.

The leadership furnished by the State 4-H Club staff is, of course, vital to the success of 4-H Club work. State leaders must do a great deal of planning with the specialists, district agents, or supervisors and with the local agricultural and home demonstration agents. 4-H Club information materials must be prepared from time to time. Judging teams must be trained, contests arranged, exhibits prepared, club camps arranged for, and many other important activities carried on in connection with the 4-H Club program. The responsibilities of 4-H Club leaders and their assistants require great tact, qualities of leadership, and the ability to work and cooperate with others as well as to stimulate others to cooperate with them. They must recognize the fact that 4-H Club work is cooperative in the strictest sense of the word.

Next to the local county agents, there is no group of extension workers of more importance to the success of 4-H Club work than district agents or supervisors. It is important that district agents give a fair proportion of their time to 4-H Club work, and it is their responsibility to see that the local agents in their districts devote the necessary amount of time to club work. In those States where district agents manifest interest and devote considerable time to 4-H Club work, the results attained are satisfactory. The amount of time given to 4-H Club work by local agents and their assistants may range from 25 to 50 percent, depending upon the situation. In some counties, the amount of time given to 4-H Club work is far below 25 percent. This is due in many instances to the tremendous load which county and home demonstration agents are carrying in connection with so many emergency activities of the war food program and other wartime activities. Where such a situation prevails, however, 4-H Club work usually does not come up to standard in either enrollment or completions. Furthermore, many rural boys and girls are deprived of the opportunity 4-H Club training has to offer them in developing their leadership qualities. It is important, therefore, that as many rural youth as possible have the advantage of this kind of practical educational training.

The education of youth starts with what the individual knows and proceeds from there into broader realms of the unknown. The farm home environments

provide much useful and practical material for educational purposes when properly and effectively utilized. Such material may reside in the fields of farming, homemaking, health and diet, conservation of natural resources, or social and civic life. Problems selected from these and other fields are used in building the 4-H Club programs and, therefore, form the basis of its structure. The information to be acquired is selected chiefly on the basis of its value in solving problems. The varied club activities provide opportunities for boys and girls to develop their leadership capabilities by accepting worth-while responsibilities in the improvement of farm, home, and community life. By this means, they find, in their own home environments, a wide variety of opportunities to learn from actual experience and to apply what they learn in their daily lives. Fortunate indeed is that person who learns early that education is a continuous process which extends throughout life. Stated in another way, education begins at the cradle where the first impressions are made and ends at the conclusion of life.

Through 4-H Club work, rural boys and girls are given the opportunity to acquire knowledge and to develop skills necessary for successful living, and to learn how to integrate their lives with activities connected with the home and community. 4-H Club work, therefore, has a vital and significant place in the extension program. Farm life can be made more enjoyable and satisfying when the work of the farm home is planned with the entire family, and all have responsibilities, all cooperate, and all share the rewards. Through this method of procedure, 4-H Club work is helping to make the work of the farm a joy and a challenge and not a burden; an intelligent process and not a drudgery. The potential worth of the Extension Service can be appraised to a considerable degree in terms of achievements in proportion as it devotes a fair amount of time to the educational growth and development of the farm boys and girls who will be the farmers and farm homemakers of tomorrow.

No more significant evidence of the potential worth of 4-H Clubs to the Nation could be given than the contributions the 1,639,000 4-H Club members have made and are yet making to the war effort. In order to contribute its full share to the Nation's war food plan, the 4-H Club program has been adjusted definitely to the production and conservation of food and fiber to help win the war. Many of the peacetime activities commonly included in the 4-H Club program have been sacrificed during wartime, but the spirit of 4-H Club work has carried on to the extent that 1943 was the greatest year in the history of club work. The total gain in enrollment in 1943 over 1942 was 13.6 percent, representing a gain of almost 200,000 club members. In their patriotic response to the war call, 4-H Club members have produced and conserved enormous quantities of food products through Victory Gardens, poultry products, dairy and beef cattle and other livestock, peanuts, soybeans, and other crops. Many individual club members have produced enough food to feed a fighter. Some have done even better than this. Several hundred million pounds of scrap have been collected by 4-H Club members. Club members have sold or purchased for themselves more than \$30,000,000 worth of war bonds and stamps. In at least 26 States, club members have sold enough bonds to purchase a Liberty Ship. 4-H Club members are active in all kinds of wartime activities, and they are gaining a clearer understanding of the meaning of democracy by participating in and practicing the democratic way of life.

Many other citations could be given to show the lasting contribution of 4-H Club work in preserving and sustaining the American way of life, but those mentioned seem ample proof that 4-H Club work has a vital and permanent place

in every program promoted and conducted by the Federal and State Extension Service. The proper training of rural youth in the principles and practices of scientific agriculture and home economics is the surest way to develop a happy, contented, and prosperous farm life.

